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FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME

Issues

Pursuant to Executive Board decision 99/19, this report deals with the following major issues:

(a) UNFPA's Technical Advisory Programme (TAP) has provided technical expertise to programme countries in the areas of population and reproductive health since 1992. The TAP faces a changing environment that requires examination to see if it is performing as effectively as possible.

(b) While the TAP's ability to provide integrated, coordinated and multidisciplinary expertise has recorded many accomplishments, it has also suffered from several weaknesses, including, among others, a lack of flexibility and synergy among different parts of the system and constraints encountered by Technical Advisory Specialists in the headquarters of other United Nations agencies in carrying out their roles to maximum effect. One notable challenge faced by the TAP is the increasingly differentiated needs among the regions of the world for varying types of technical support, which are detailed in the report.

(c) To address these issues, several options can be considered, including continuing the current system; abolishing it entirely; distributing regional technical advisory posts to UNFPA country offices; or reducing the number of regional posts to give country offices more flexibility in securing technical expertise and recasting the arrangements with agency headquarters into more strategic partnerships. This latter, preferred, option (outlined in paragraphs 60-61) would aim to further strengthen national capacity by having regional offices focus more on strategic interventions and emphasize knowledge sharing.

(d) The total cost of the preferred option would be $76 million for four years, including $22 million for a transition year (2002) during which the newly reconfigured posts would be filled.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Executive Board decision

1. In its decision 99/19, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to submit for its approval a report on options that would best serve the purpose of ensuring that UNFPA country programmes receive the strategic and technical guidance that they need.

2. At the third regular session 1999, the Executive Board endorsed the current Technical Advisory Programme (TAP) and approved an amount of $56.5 million over an interim two-year period, 2000-2001. Therefore, new arrangements for UNFPA technical support would need to be approved by the Executive Board for the four-year period, 2002-2005. In its discussion on the TAP, delegations encouraged UNFPA to find efficient and innovative ways to ensure effective and continuous support for national capacity building and technical cooperation in the areas of reproductive health and population. Delegations further requested UNFPA to, *inter alia*, assess the value and contribution of the current TAP system to UNFPA goals and, based on an assessment of country and regional needs, to elaborate possible alternative cooperation mechanisms that would respond to programme country needs for technical and strategic support. In its decision, the Executive Board further requested UNFPA to propose a preferred arrangement for future UNFPA technical support and to describe how it would strengthen national capacity and in-country activities related to the implementation of ICPD and ICPD+5 goals; facilitate closer linkages and coherence with other United Nations agencies and other partners; and provide for its monitoring and evaluation. The Executive Board also requested UNFPA to describe the institutional, reporting and management arrangements for the proposed preferred option, as well as the value added to the overall work of the Fund.

3. This report is a result of a review of the current TAP arrangements that included an extensive process of consultation both at headquarters and in country offices and with the Fund's partners, including United Nations agencies, other stakeholders and, in particular, with members of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), which includes all of the other United Nations agencies that participate in the TAP system. The review of the TAP also took account of a number of other inputs, including the Fund's Field Needs Assessment Study, which has yielded valuable insight and feedback on the current status of programme country technical needs and priorities. As a result of its review, UNFPA is proposing refinements to its technical advisory arrangements.

B. The current Technical Advisory Programme system

4. The TAP is an inter-agency arrangement through which UNFPA's technical cooperation has been channelled to countries in support of population and development activities. Since its inception in 1992, it has continued to evolve both in terms of its substantive areas of focus and its method of servicing the technical support needs of country programmes. Following the adoption

of the ICPD Programme of Action in 1994, the system was modified to support more effectively the reproductive health approach and to ensure mainstreaming of gender concerns into population and reproductive health programmes.

5. Increasing self-reliance in the population and development field has been an important guiding principle of the TAP. Thus, the TAP was planned to promote local technical capacity for population and development by establishing effective partnerships with national and regional institutions. The TAP was designed to play an important role in helping country programmes reflect the goals of the ICPD and of the ICPD+5 process and to contribute to an integrated, coordinated and multidisciplinary approach to population and development programmes. The multisectoral make-up of the TAP is a distinctive feature that enables the delivery of advisory services to country programmes in a comprehensive and synergistic manner. This type of multidimensional support is designed to strengthen both the substantive and operational aspects of country programmes, ensuring their ability to respond appropriately to country needs, priorities and capacities.

6. The TAP has been structured as a three-tier arrangement. The first tier of the system is composed of national and regional expertise; the second tier is a group of technical specialists assigned to nine multidisciplinary regional Country Technical Services Teams (CSTs) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dakar, Senegal; Harare, Zimbabwe; Katmandu, Nepal; Suva, Fiji; Bangkok, Thailand; Amman, Jordan; Mexico City, Mexico; and Bratislava, Slovakia. These nine CSTs are made up of specialists recruited by UNFPA and other United Nations partner agencies. The third tier is made up of Technical Advisory Services (TAS) specialists posted at the headquarters or regional offices of relevant United Nations agencies – ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, UNIFEM, UNAIDS and United Nations regional commissions.

C. The changing context for technical cooperation

7. In determining the most effective modality for UNFPA's technical cooperation programme for the next four years, attention must be given to a number of emerging realities that are determining the overall context and direction of technical cooperation activities for the future. These include such changes in the modalities for development cooperation as Common Country Assessments (CCAs), United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and sector-wide approaches (SWAps). In addition, wider partnerships with civil society, the private sector and South-South partners are being pursued.

8. The ICPD agenda remains the focus of UNFPA's programmes and activities. However, a number of substantive issues now require further attention, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, reproductive health commodity security, health sector reform, integration of reproductive health into primary health-care services and the needs of countries emerging from conflict situations. There is also a need to better integrate ICPD issues into policy-level dialogues. The introduction

of the results-based management (RBM) approach into UNFPA operations also requires significant technical advisory support for its effective implementation. The multifaceted organizational changes under way in UNFPA have important implications for the scope and substance of proposed options for the Fund's technical cooperation programmes.

II. TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME RESULTS, 1998-2001

A. Achievements

9. UNFPA's investment in the TAP system during the period 1998-2001 has contributed globally to helping countries implement the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions agreed at the ICPD+5 review. Assessing the specific impact of the TAP on national population programmes is difficult, however, largely because the results of the interventions are embedded in the programme results themselves. Nevertheless, certain outputs can be attributed to the multidimensional support provided by the TAP system. Since previous reports submitted to the Executive Board have provided extensive analysis of TAP achievements, this section presents only a few highlights of some key results.

10. The TAP has played an important role in providing UNFPA country offices with the requisite technical expertise to ensure that key phases of the country programming process are undertaken in a timely and substantive manner. The programme approach has entailed the development of coherent and integrated subprogrammes, and this has translated into a high demand for multisectoral skills and knowledge in the area of population and development. In this regard, the CSTs have provided significant support to an extensive programming process that includes carrying out Country Population Assessments, developing national strategies and formulating programmes and subprogrammes. As a result, the majority of UNFPA programmes have been able to translate ICPD concepts into concrete operational terms.

11. The TAP has participated in the United Nations reform processes as well as in the development of mechanisms aimed at facilitating coordinated approaches to development issues at the country level. In particular, CSTs have been involved in the elaboration of CCAs and UNDAFs. During such exercises, CSTs work with national counterparts, NGOs and other stakeholders to ensure that population and development strategies and reproductive health issues are integrated into development mechanisms. CSTs have also been engaged in assisting UNFPA field offices in countries undertaking SWAps, in collaboration with other development partners such as the World Bank. In these processes, while there is still much progress to be made by UNFPA, the multisectoral make-up of the TAP has proven especially valuable in ensuring that population and development strategies and reproductive health dimensions are addressed in broader national development policies and plans.

12. Within the TAP framework, CSTs have been instrumental in bringing visibility to several emerging issues. Advisers in all the regional teams have, for example, taken a proactive role in promoting awareness on adolescent reproductive health issues, particularly with regard to policy-making and improving access and quality of services. Reproductive health in emergency and crisis situations is another dimension to which CSTs have given more focused attention.

13. Strengthening national capacity is recognized as the pivotal function of the TAP. During 1999-2000, approximately one-third of all CST mission activities were directly related to capacity-building efforts. One of the main strategies of the CSTs to improve local technical capacity is through participation in formal national and regional training workshops. Another approach has been to attach national experts to CSTs for training to provide nationals with a multidisciplinary perspective and exposure. These trainees have also benefited from visiting and interacting with staff in governmental and non-governmental agencies in the host CST country. This has also helped promote South-South cooperation.

14. The TAP system has also been an effective catalyst in the introduction of new management systems and tools and their dissemination and implementation at the field level. CSTs have played an active role in efforts to institutionalize the RBM approach. CST specialists from each of the regional teams have been trained as resource persons on RBM and have disseminated these newly acquired skills to their colleagues as well as to national counterparts and country office staff through training workshops, in coordination with the Training Branch at UNFPA headquarters.

15. TAS specialists at agency headquarters have collaborated with each other across agency lines in workshops and strategy sessions and with CSTs in technical workshops aimed at ensuring the delivery of high-quality services by the CSTs to programme countries. They have facilitated sharing of experiences through preparation of synthesized summaries of mission reports from all CST advisers, highlighting lessons learned and best practices. TAS specialists have also served as resource persons in internal CST seminars in order to update the teams in their areas of specialization. The TAS specialists have also contributed to establishing linkages between population and development issues and their respective areas of work.

B. Constraints

16. The TAP system has also encountered many constraints. The TAP was designed to respond to a wide variety of technical assistance needs identified by countries in all phases of programming. This approach, which has come to entail a large number of missions, has not generally allowed CSTs to take a more strategic and selective approach in providing technical assistance. This has resulted in insufficient time and attention for such activities as systematic follow-up on technical assistance recommendations and to the collection, documentation, promotion and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices. CSTs have also been required

at times to respond to programme management needs due to limited capacity in UNFPA country offices. This approach has had several implications.

17. Flexibility. Each CST was provided with a fixed number of posts and expected to respond to a wide variety of technical assistance requests. Over time, the demand for CST assistance has increased over a wider range of technical specialties. Access to such resources in a timely manner has not always been possible; a limited number of advisers cannot cover all areas of technical expertise nor provide a timely response at all times. Moreover, given the number of the missions, the CSTs have not had sufficient opportunity to recycle their knowledge and skills in their respective areas of specialization. At the same time, the TAP system has not sufficiently performed its function as a clearing house for technical support services to meet the needs of country offices by outsourcing and by helping to field experts from national, regional and international levels as appropriate.

18. Knowledge sharing and organizational learning. The pressure of demands in a variety of areas and the absence of a mechanism to follow up on missions has weakened the TAP's capacity to carry out effectively one of its intended primary functions – knowledge sharing. Despite a number of publications and numerous intercountry and interregional workshops – organized as a way of providing for the exchange of strategies, lessons learned and best practices – knowledge sharing efforts have not been sufficiently systematic.

19. Regional specificities. Demand for TAP support has become increasingly differentiated by region. The findings of the recently conducted Field Needs Assessment Study underscored strong regional specificities. The need to recognize and respond to new and emerging trends that are region specific and to ensure that technical support reflects changing regional contexts is underscored by all stakeholders.

20. Role of TAS specialists. TAS specialists have proven to be as committed as their counterparts in the CSTs in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. However, there have been difficulties in ensuring a minimum staff in each agency to be responsible for technical backstopping of all CSTs and to mainstream population issues into the programme of the agency itself. As a result, this component of the TAP has not been able to achieve its full potential in terms of the level of synergy and partnership envisaged. The many factors that have contributed to this have already been discussed in depth by the IATF. The way forward requires rethinking programme objectives and defining new arrangements more suited to the changing needs for technical cooperation.

21. Recruitment. The TAP system has had administrative constraints due to multi-agency involvement in recruitment. The arrangements have encountered difficulties in equalizing compensations and benefits because of the differences in agency rules. It has also been cumbersome and costly in administrative terms.

22. Partnerships. The CSTs have to a large extent operated as self-sufficient entities primarily servicing the country offices. Partnerships are an increasing trend in the current context for technical cooperation, and the opportunities for synergy among different technical service providers, both within the United Nations system and outside, are now much greater.

23. National capacity building. The promotion of self-reliance has been a key goal of the TAP system since its inception. Considerable efforts have been made at all levels of the system to promote national capacity building. This was a major area of CST support, as confirmed by the large numbers of missions undertaken for this purpose. While many efforts, such as training, have produced positive outcomes, this has not yet resulted in the creation of a critical mass of technical experts in all regions able to address national population issues and to promote the ICPD agenda in a self-reliant manner.

C. Lessons learned

24. The review of achievements and constraints during the last four years of TAP implementation shows that, overall, the TAP system has provided important advisory support to national population and development programmes. Its multidisciplinary nature has enabled the TAP to respond to both the substantive and operational aspects of country programmes and has given UNFPA a comparative advantage in having a ready pool of experts to service the technical needs of population and reproductive health programmes.

25. However, it has also been found that some of the services and roles of the TAP system can be delivered at either a lower cost or more effectively through other means, notably by strengthening UNFPA field offices and by accessing other sources of expertise, nationally and internationally. At the same time, the TAP system should be focused on the kinds of support that it can deliver most cost effectively. This requires changes in the functions and composition of CSTs, and it requires a different headquarters-level arrangement with sister United Nations agencies. The CSTs should focus on tasks in which their multidisciplinarity, their institutional knowledge and their experience of other countries and regions will have a strategic impact on programme activities. More technical support activities, focused on strategic inputs, could be carried out at the home base of the CST, reducing costs and improving effectiveness. This is contingent on the availability of information technology capacity that ensures a flow of information between the client and the service provider.

26. In this sense, the value added of the current arrangement would be enhanced if greater flexibility were built into the system. This would enable country offices to access alternative sources of technical support, including national, regional and international expertise, in a cost-effective manner. CSTs should play a more proactive role in identifying and strengthening different sources of technical support. They should also be able to recruit short-term consultants to undertake specialized tasks. The use of country office staff as providers of technical support for other country programmes is increasingly viewed as a possible cost-effective option that can provide added value to the quality and scope of UNFPA's technical cooperation programme. Related to this is the possibility of increasing the utilization of South-South cooperation as an effective form of utilizing existing resources and partnering more with United Nations system organizations and subregional teams and other such resources available outside the United Nations system.

27. Given the increased perception of the importance of regional specificities and cultural diversities, the technical support system will have to reflect regional and subregional priorities more accurately. This will require technical teams whose composition and size reflect differing regional and national needs.

28. In terms of the headquarters-level TAS component, the funding by UNFPA of fixed posts at United Nations agencies and regional commissions no longer meets the needs of UNFPA country offices nor is it a cost-effective manner for pursuing partnerships.

29. Monitoring and evaluation of the TAP requires a more systematic approach. Benchmarks were not always in place when the TAP initiated its activities, making it difficult to assess the impact of its implementation in an objective manner. Future arrangements will have to be results oriented with indicators that will assess the level of achievement of outputs generated by the technical advisory programme.

III. REGIONAL NEEDS FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT, 2002-2005

30. Recognition of the need to enhance the strategic role of technical support together with the increased perception that regional specificities and priorities translate into clearly differentiated needs for technical support are the key elements in the definition of UNFPA's new technical support model. These aspects were unequivocally highlighted by the Field Needs Assessment Study.

31. Some common concerns among countries were also substantiated by the findings of the Field Needs Assessment Study. One of these concerns is the quality of care of reproductive health services. Even as reproductive health services become more widely available, improving the quality of services remains a major challenge. Technical cooperation has an important role in providing the guidelines for setting standards, including through developing protocols and

providing appropriate tools and skills for ensuring that reproductive health services respond to the specific needs of different groups of clients. In the population and development area, a salient issue of common concern is the continuing need for national capacity building in order to form a mass of technical expertise.

A. Africa

32. The environment for cooperation in the areas of population and reproductive health in Africa is characterized by high demand for technical support in a wide range of substantive areas in almost all countries in the region. Furthermore, the supply of national and regional human technical resources remains relatively limited and is constantly undermined by high levels of attrition. These conditions are reflected in the field needs assessment findings highlighting the heavy dependence of the country offices on the CSTs for support in managing and implementing country programmes. It is also reflected in the large number of missions, often in excess of recommended numbers, reported by the three CSTs in the region.

33. National capacity building has been an important TAP objective in the region. The effort invested in this undertaking has been considerable, as evidenced by the number of training activities, both formal and on-the-job, that have been undertaken. Nevertheless, serious shortcomings in the availability of national and regional human technical resources persist and are exacerbated by high staff turnover in governments, NGOs and regional institutions owing to unattractive conditions of service and, in some countries, to mortality stemming from AIDS. Thus, an over-reliance on CSTs for technical support persists in spite of past efforts. Ironically, the high demand for CST advisers to undertake technical backstopping for which nationals are not conveniently available reduces the time that advisers could otherwise use to address capacity-building needs.

34. Substantively, various challenges requiring technical assistance are emerging in the region. Beyond doubt, for most countries in sub-Saharan Africa the primary challenge is confronting the HIV/AIDS menace. This implies dealing vigorously with the pandemic where it has gained a firm foothold and moving with determination to avoid its doing so in those countries not yet severely affected. The CSTs in Africa have, of course, already been engaged in important activities related to the pandemic, including the development of a regional strategy in consultation with key stakeholders.

35. Not only does HIV/AIDS present challenges in terms of reproductive health services but also in the identification of sociocultural factors facilitating the spread of the disease and those that could be mustered in prevention efforts. Similarly, now that considerable progress has been made in creating awareness of the disease, a shift towards behavioural change communication must be introduced. Population data gathering and analysis must be reoriented to capture information vital for planning and/or evaluating HIV/AIDS interventions. Population policies

and sectoral plans must be modified to reflect changing demographic realities. Health sector reform and decentralization of health management require efforts to ensure that HIV/AIDS is duly prioritized. Similarly, enhanced advocacy efforts must be directed at wavering political and religious leaders at national and community levels. In particular, community support will be required for prevention efforts to have any chance of success.

36. Other substantive areas requiring particular technical support in Africa include: the continuing importance of family planning; the integration of reproductive health into emergency and humanitarian response programmes; improvement in the status of women and elimination of violence against them; health system management; contraceptive and reproductive health commodity logistics; and gaining acceptance for, and increasing provision of, reproductive health information and services for youth.

B. Latin America and the Caribbean

37. Technical cooperation constitutes an increasingly major segment of UNFPA's presence in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Because of the large number of countries and the small amount of available financial resources, there are increasing demands on technical assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in view of the diversity of situations encountered in dealing with population and reproductive health issues. Several countries are fairly well advanced on both their fertility and urban transitions and, at the aggregate level, meet the thresholds of many ICPD indicators. They are thus classified as "C" and "O" countries under the Fund's resource allocation criteria. Nevertheless, significant pockets of severe poverty remain within these countries, and important population-related problems still have to be addressed. At the other end of the scale, several countries are still marked by generalized poverty and are classified as "A" or "B" countries.

38. The biggest changes in technical assistance will occur in the region with respect to the more advanced countries. In "C" and "O" countries, UNFPA's presence will be increasingly technical rather than financial. This technical presence is critical in terms of maintaining political support for the ICPD agenda, diversifying sources for technical assistance support, and promoting South-South cooperation in sustaining progress made in the achievement of ICPD goals. In order for UNFPA's presence to be meaningful, despite its limited financial resources, it will have to field a team composed of high-quality and well-respected advisers and consultants. They will have to be able to dialogue at the highest decision-making levels, bringing to the table state-of-the-art information and tools and a capacity for strategic thinking. They will have to help policy makers deal with emerging issues and also to provide strategic assistance aimed at making national resources and programmes more effective in dealing with the needs of the country's own poorer regions and segments. Finally, they should help the country move forward on the road to self-reliance.

39. A special challenge is posed by the Caribbean subregion with its great social diversity. Some of the countries in this subregion have been reclassified, and decisions need to be taken regarding new strategic directions. Despite the classification of many countries in the "C" category, the areas of population and development strategies, adolescent reproductive health and gender will all require considerable technical support. UNFPA will need the support of the CST in order to strengthen and continue to build a strong, visible UNFPA presence in the region and to reinforce relationships with governments, other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

C. Asia and the Pacific

40. The 33 countries that make up the Asia and the Pacific region have highly differentiated needs for technical cooperation. There are countries that over time have successfully built national capacity, and there are many other countries that continue to require significant technical support. Against this background, there are strategic entry points for technical cooperation that can make a difference in achieving ICPD and ICPD+5 goals.

41. One of the major challenges for the majority of "A" and "B" countries in the region is the provision of key components of reproductive health services as defined by the ICPD Programme of Action. Countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Viet Nam are able to deliver only two or three of the services while others such as Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar have even greater needs. The challenge remains to develop integrated reproductive health service systems that are in line with the capacities and resources of programme countries.

42. In the area of population and development, clarity and strategic guidance is required by countries facing such common concerns as high levels of urbanization, management of scarce environmental resources, migration flows, ageing, and trafficking of women and children. At the subregional level, particularly in South Asia, countries such as India and Pakistan have decentralized national population and development programmes that create new demands for technical support.

43. Notably, countries have become more enterprising in their efforts to use existing capacity in the region to address their technical cooperation needs. Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand have strong national capacity that is being channelled to promote South-South cooperation. For example, Thailand has been proactive in initiating a South-South programme to promote technical cooperation on cross-border issues that is being facilitated by UNFPA. UNFPA's leverage in these instances is to develop and support strategic regional initiatives that involve partnerships among countries.

44. Countries in the Pacific subregion, which includes six UNFPA priority countries, face particular challenges of providing high-quality reproductive health services to scattered and

difficult-to- reach island populations. Moreover, high outmigration of trained personnel means technical support is required for training and retraining of health professionals. Other related needs include logistics management, particularly for the timely supply of contraceptives, and the establishment of effective service statistics systems. In the area of population and development, support is needed to respond to pressing environmental issues, the drift to urban areas and the implications of diseconomies of scale for poverty reduction efforts.

D. Arab States, Europe and Central Asia

45. The context for technical cooperation in the area of population and development in the Arab States, Europe and Central Asia regions is wide-ranging and complex, reflecting the demographic diversity of the countries. Most of the countries in the region have adequate levels of national capacity to implement national population programmes. Technical support in this context would aim to upgrade skills of national experts and to provide state-of-the-art knowledge. In particular, more focus needs to be given to the strategic utilization of experts from the region in support of South-South modalities.

46. Reproductive health is a significant area for technical support in the Arab region. Reproductive health services are mostly provided separate from other health-care services, and continued technical support is needed to integrate reproductive health into primary health-care services. Addressing the sexual and reproductive health information and service needs of adolescents is an important area for future technical service support. Also, in some countries health sector reform is under way and will have important implications for how reproductive health services are managed.

47. In the area of population and development, a number of challenges are notable. While some achievements have been made in generating indicators for programme monitoring and policy research for integrating gender into social policy development, much more work is needed to sustain and institutionalize these efforts. Population policy research and analysis is an area of high demand for technical support and is an area in which UNFPA has a comparative advantage.

48. Advocacy issues such as reproductive rights, gender-based violence and male involvement are particularly sensitive issues that require strategic technical support. Developing capacity to design, manage and implement effective advocacy programmes and activities both for national counterparts and UNFPA country office staff would yield dividends in terms of increased capacity to follow up and sustain advocacy programmes. The mainstreaming of gender equality concerns into all programme areas is another important challenge in the region, and provision of technical expertise on such issues would provide much added value to national programmes.

49. In the countries with economies in transition of Europe and Central Asia, there is considerable variation among countries in the region with regard to issues and capacities in the

area of population and development. Yet, for many countries reproductive and sexual health is a priority concern, particularly with regard to such issues as the rising risk of transmission of STIs and HIV/AIDS, particularly among young people; the effects of repeated and unsafe abortions; the increasing incidence of unsafe sexual behaviour and substance abuse; the transmission of HIV by injecting drugs; and the increasing incidence of gender-based violence, including trafficking. IEC and advocacy specifically responding to adolescent sexual and reproductive health needs is increasingly becoming a strategic area for the provision of advisory services. In the area of population and development, building national capacity for collection, analysis and utilization of data for policy and planning is an area requiring more focused technical support.

IV. MODALITIES CONSIDERED FOR FUTURE UNFPA TECHNICAL SUPPORT

A. Criteria for assessing future arrangements for UNFPA technical support

50. Several modalities for UNFPA to provide technical support in the future have been considered. Key considerations in choosing among them were cost-effectiveness and strategic use of financial and human resources; efficiency of response to increasingly diversified demands; ability to provide effective support to national capacity building; timeliness, quality, continuity and relevance of technical cooperation in key stages of country programme development, management, and evaluation; ability to respond to differentiated subregional and regional needs; and ability to work effectively with other United Nations agencies and other partners.

51. The strengths and weaknesses of different possible arrangements for technical support were assessed. Building on the experiences of the current TAP system, the criteria chosen reflect the direction given by the Executive Board, the findings and recommendations of the Field Needs Assessment Study as well as inputs from UNFPA headquarters and field staff and from the IATF. Emphasis was placed on the flexible use of technical resources from a broader range of United Nations and other sources, particularly from the programme countries themselves.

52. Finally, in line with the broader goals of the Fund's transition exercise it was clear that any future arrangement for UNFPA technical support should also contribute to operational and management efforts to institutionalize strategic thinking and the sharing of knowledge, to develop guidance and clear directives on how to operationalize UNFPA's main substantive areas and to strengthen field offices. Efforts in these areas, which the CSTs both contribute to and are affected by, include further clarifying the structures and functions between the field and headquarters and between and among country offices and the CSTs. It was also necessary to develop a human resource strategy that ensures that country offices have the requisite competencies to perform the tasks and functions outlined in their terms of reference.

B. Assessment of arrangements considered but rejected for UNFPA technical support

53. UNFPA reviewed and assessed the different kinds and combinations of arrangements for strategic and technical assistance to UNFPA programme countries. In the review, it became evident that while some modalities would be more desirable in some national or regional contexts, they would not necessarily be as effective elsewhere. This overall finding was reinforced by the Field Needs Assessment Study, which stressed the need to consider options that are sensitive to subregional and regional differences and that permit flexibility in obtaining and using technical assistance from a range of sources.

54. Maintaining current system. The arrangements that were considered and rejected as possible future options for UNFPA technical support include maintaining the current TAP system, composed of the CSTs and the United Nations agency headquarters component, as is. The assessment of constraints and lessons learned from the operation of the current TAP system, as well as the findings of the Field Needs Assessment Study, argue against maintaining the current system in its present form. The current system undoubtedly has strengths, but it needs to be adjusted to meet evolving needs and priorities. The arrangement whereby the TAS component would provide state-of-the-art support to CSTs has not entirely fulfilled its expected role. Multiple recruitment practices have also created unnecessary difficulties. Greater attention needs to be placed on regional specificities. Playing a strategic role in a variety of contexts requires a more flexible system, one more centred on knowledge sharing, organizational learning and effective partnerships.

55. Dissolving the TAP system. One option that was considered was to dissolve the TAP system and to reallocate resources to countries for increased technical capacity building at the country level through a variable mix of arrangements and sources of technical cooperation. Such a new system could have several modalities. These would include the use of national and/or international consultants, Chief Technical Advisers, national technical support staff, United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), national technical support units, and national and/or regional institutions.

56. Replacement of the TAP by outside consultants has more disadvantages than advantages. While countries would gain from having direct and increased resources for technical support, as well as flexibility in obtaining technical services from a range of valuable national and international sources, there would be significant losses. These losses would include discontinuity in technical advice and support to regional strategic thinking and advocacy for organizational priorities and policies; loss of knowledge sharing and lessons learned within and across subregions and regions; fragmentation of interdisciplinary technical support to country programmes; limited technical oversight and coordination; lack of a broad overview for brokering technical cooperation; and limited inputs to UNFPA institutional memory and capacity.

57. Moreover, the continuity of interdisciplinary technical cooperation at both country and regional levels would be weakened if in-house expertise were totally replaced with external assistance, thereby diminishing UNFPA presence and advocacy at the regional level. Further, in some countries the hiring of the highest quality and most capable individuals, who are often Government and NGO employees, would actually weaken rather than strengthen national institutions.

58. A reliance solely on external consultants to provide strategic and technical support would also be accompanied by significant risks associated with their availability, accountability and quality of work. In many cases, such outside consultants would possess limited knowledge of UNFPA and United Nations priorities, culture and procedures. Additionally, both national and international external consultants might be constrained in the kinds of advice or roles that they can play in a country, minimizing the effectiveness of their services. Further disadvantages include a lack of cost-effectiveness in a system that would place an additional burden on individual country offices for the administration, management and supervision of consultants, many of whom are often the same individuals or institutions sought by other development partners and bilateral agencies in the country.

59. Redistributing TAP posts to countries. Similarly, the option of redistributing the TAP specialist posts to UNFPA country offices would yield some, but limited, benefits. The advantages of this proposal include a strengthening of technical capacity and continuity of technical advice in the specialists' areas in the country in which they are posted. The major disadvantage is that with the current level of funding of the TAP, technical specialists could be provided only to a limited number of countries. In order to ensure that each country office had a specialist in at least each of UNFPA's three programme areas, the total number of specialists would need to increase substantially. If the current number of TAP posts were redistributed only to the 62 category "A" countries there would, on average, be two specialists redeployed to each country. As noted earlier, however, the need to ensure interdisciplinary technical expertise, albeit of a different kind and complexity, in category "B" and "C" countries is equally important. Meanwhile, the same disadvantages associated with the absence of CSTs, i.e., less sustained national and regional capacity building, lost opportunities for knowledge sharing, and difficulties in assuring quality, would also occur under this arrangement.

V. TOWARDS A PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE UNFPA TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME, 2002-2005

A. Summary

60. The preferred arrangement for UNFPA technical support that is being proposed for the period 2002-2005 builds on the strengths of the CSTs as field-based subregional and regional teams of technical experts. It proposes to transform the mostly administrative arrangement of

TAS specialists into a substantive-based strategic partnership programme making use of the knowledge to be found in the headquarters of sister agencies. The essential features of the preferred arrangement for future UNFPA technical support are:

(a) More streamlined CSTs, having different compositions according to regional needs and greater emphasis on strategic functions;

(b) Establishment of a more substantive-based form of technical collaboration with United Nations agencies and regional commissions in place of the TAS layer of posts;

(c) Enhanced partnerships between the CSTs and other United Nations regional and subregional technical teams;

(d) Increased reliance on national and regional human and institutional resources for technical assistance;

(e) Use of a strategic approach to capacity building for technical assistance; and

(f) Streamlined management and administrative arrangements to reduce transaction costs and standardize management procedures.

61. Thus, the proposed arrangement seeks to address weaknesses in the current TAP system as well as to satisfy the criteria for future technical support arrangements by: (a) adjusting the composition and skills of the CSTs in line with the specific needs and capacities of the countries in the subregions and regions in which they are located; (b) modifying the terms of reference of the CSTs toward more strategic interventions, placing greater emphasis on knowledge sharing and on the use of national and regional sources of technical support; and (c) enhancing the flexibility of technical support by providing resources to the CSTs to supplement the core staff with short-term consultants. As regards the United Nations agencies headquarters' component of the current TAP system, the aim is to develop a more effective and results-based partnership with United Nations agencies and regional economic commissions. The implementation of the proposed new system would be reported on by the Fund to the Executive Board in the context of the Executive Director's annual report.

B. Purpose of the proposed UNFPA Technical Advisory Programme, 2002-2005

62. The proposed TAP arrangements will be a key element in the attainment of the organization's overall goal, as stated in the MYFF, of strengthening national self-reliance in the areas of population and reproductive health. Specifically, the TAP's role is to contribute to: (a) increased national and regional capacities to provide technical support for population and development programmes; (b) increased availability and use of technical information to improve

the effectiveness of national population and development programmes; and (c) improved strategic technical support at key stages of the UNFPA country programme cycle as well as in such United Nations system-wide processes as the CCA and UNDAF.

63. Under the proposed new TAP arrangement, the strategic role of the CSTs will be undertaken through an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach aimed at:

(a) Analysing ongoing trends, evolving needs and emerging issues in order to identify appropriate responses at the country, regional and institutional levels;

(b) Participating in policy dialogue at the country, regional and institutional levels;

(c) Synthesizing, analysing and disseminating lessons learned and best practices drawn from country and regional experiences;

(d) Providing technical support to countries in key stages of the UNFPA programme cycle, including the preparation of CCAs, PRSPs, UNDAFs, country programme outlines, programme reviews and midterm reviews;

(e) Assisting countries in identifying and deploying individuals and institutions capable of providing technical support in topical areas, including through maintaining and updating a database on national and regional expertise;

(f) Identifying, developing and applying effective strategies for capacity building at the country and regional levels;

(g) Promoting South-South collaboration within and among regions;

(h) Collaborating systematically with UNFPA headquarters in the analysis of regional and substantive trends as well as in the formulation of UNFPA policies and guidelines;

(i) Participating with headquarters divisions and other United Nations technical regional and subregional teams in conceptualizing and developing regional and interregional approaches;

(j) Assisting country offices to create a supporting environment to enhance partnerships, mobilize resources and build support for population and reproductive health programmes;

(k) Assisting country offices in developing information systems to provide systematic inputs for the assessment of population and development programmes;

(l) Participating with United Nations partners and headquarters divisions in the identification of needs to be met by the strategic partnership programme and in incorporating those outputs into country programmes; and

(m) Collaborating with headquarters divisions to promote the cultural changes necessary for successful implementation of results-based management.

C. Components of the preferred option

64. Under the preferred option, the CSTs will remain at the core of UNFPA efforts to provide sound, timely, quality technical assistance. However, a shift in the emphasis of CST functions and the increasing flexibility and reliance on national and regional human resources will permit a reduction in the overall number of CST advisers during the period 2002-2005. Additionally, the substantive compositions of the teams will change in accordance with the varying needs for technical assistance resulting from cultural and regional specificities and from differing mixes of category A, B, C, T, and O countries in the regions and subregions.

TAS Specialists and CST POSTS AS OF 2003

Asia			
	Bangkok	**10**	**7**
	Katmandu	**12**	**7**
	Suva	**5**	**3**
Latin America			
	Mexico	**14**	**10**
Arab States			
	Amman	**14**	**9**
Europe			
	Bratislava	**5**	**5**
Africa			
	Addis Ababa	**17**	**13**
	Dakar	**19**	**13**
	Harare	**17**	**11**
TOTAL		**113**	**78**
TAS Specialists		**18**	**0**
Grand Total		**131**	**78**

65. The table above gives the number of posts foreseen for 2003-2005 (2002 will be a transition year maintaining current posts). These include the Directors of the CSTs, except in Suva, where the UNFPA Representative will also serve as the CST Director.

66. The size and composition of the CSTs will vary in accordance with the capacity and ability of the country office in each region to access other sources of technical assistance, including South-South cooperation. It should be noted that the CST deployment in Africa will remain the largest due to the magnitude of the need and the priority given by the international community and the United Nations system to this region. Moreover, access of UNFPA country offices to national and/or South-South technical support services in that region are weakest and most in need of strengthening through the CST modality.

67. In order to enhance the ability of the CSTs to provide timely technical support, each CST will have a supplementary budget for knowledge sharing, training for capacity building and for hiring consultants to complement the core staff as needed. The CSTs have experimented with flexible resources for consultancies over the course of the past year. This arrangement has proven to be a useful approach to enhancing the capacity of the CSTs to provide timely and strategic technical support to the country offices. It is particularly useful in responding to specific demands not related to the programme cycle and in situations in which CST advisers are currently unavailable or lack expertise.

68. In addition to their primary function of providing direct technical assistance to countries, CSTs will be proactive in assisting country offices to identify and deploy national or regional individuals and institutions capable of providing technical assistance, thereby facilitating the access by country offices to alternative sources of technical support. Thus, greater reliance will be placed on national and regional consultants and institutions. This will require greater efforts aimed at strengthening and preparing national and regional human resources. CSTs will continue to provide direct technical assistance to governments and UNFPA country offices but will focus more on strategic interventions.

69. Since a high proportion of country programme resources are allocated to buying technical expertise, the proposed new technical advisory system would create more opportunities for countries to access high-quality expertise from a variety of sources nationally, regionally and internationally. In this context, the CSTs will develop a roster system of national and regional personnel and institutions capable of providing technical support. These will be periodically updated and will incorporate assessments of the work performed. Care will be taken to avoid draining scarce personnel away from governments and national NGOs.

70. To improve the capacity of governments and NGOs to design and manage their own population programmes, the CSTs will work with UNFPA headquarters and other partners to develop more effective approaches to capacity building and to the promotion of national self-

reliance. These approaches will have built-in mechanisms and indicators to measure real improvements in national capacity. Under the proposed arrangements, the CSTs will not spend their entire time on missions but will plan their work to give priority to capacity building, knowledge sharing and policy-level assistance.

71. It is proposed that all recruitment of CST staff will be handled by UNFPA in order to improve and standardize recruitment practices and the monitoring and evaluation of performance. It has been agreed with IATF partners that recruitment is not essential for inter-agency collaboration. The new system will become fully operational in January 2003, with 2002 being a transition year. Proposed mechanisms to strengthen the substantive inter-agency nature of the system are detailed below

D. Improved collaboration with other United Nations agencies

72. In place of the current agency headquarters arrangement that provides funding for a fixed number of full-time posts at agencies and regional commissions, a new UNFPA-United Nations agency strategic partnership programme will be developed, based on the identification of specific thematic areas for cooperation, with agreed technical outputs that draw upon the agencies' comparative advantages and knowledge. This partnership programme will be developed according to the priorities of both partners and in line with each agency's work plan. It will focus on the development of products needed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of national population and reproductive health programmes supported by UNFPA. This modality will be based upon cost-sharing and will raise additional resources whenever feasible. The work plans and budgets of these programme partnerships will be developed and approved, in principle, for four years, with an annual review process.

73. The proposed inter-agency collaboration will have several roles under the new arrangement. A major function will be to collaborate with CSTs and country offices in the initial stages of country programming. In this process, the new arrangement foresees closer links and partnerships between the CSTs, the United Nations system and other subregional technical teams, notably the UNICEF regional offices, UNDP subregional facilities (SURFs), ILO multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and UNAIDS intercountry teams, etc. The proposed inter-agency collaboration will facilitate participation at the country level, working with CSTs and country offices, in programme development and monitoring activities to ensure complementarity of UNFPA programmes with other agencies' activities. The arrangement will provide opportunities for the agencies to participate as resources for training in areas of their comparative advantage. Using information technology, the CSTs will be able to channel databases and information networks available in agencies for use by UNFPA country offices. The CSTs will help disseminate state-of-the-art materials, tools and guidance notes available from the United Nations agencies to the country level. The proposed new mechanisms will include annual meetings with agency partners, CST Directors and UNFPA headquarters to review regional and

subregional technical support needs and assess the results attained by the strategic partnership programme.

VI. PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

74. Planning. The annual results-based work plan of each CST will be developed with the participation of UNFPA Representatives, the CST and UNFPA headquarters. This will be done through the mechanism of a joint annual meeting that will allow for the participation, as appropriate, of United Nations system and other partners. The work plan will be based on the following planning process: (a) analysis of the population situation, priorities, trends and emerging issues in the region or subregion; (b) analysis of the implementation of each country programme; (c) identification of the priorities for technical support at different levels; and (d) identification of the available sources for technical expertise in the region and the interventions requiring CST involvement. This process will result in the establishment of an initial work plan with clearly identified outputs in regard to the strategic technical support to countries that is to be provided by the CST, the technical assistance that is to be provided by other sources, and initiatives to build knowledge-sharing capacity. An update of the work plan will be conducted by midyear, based on lessons learned and new emerging trends.

75. Monitoring. UNFPA will establish a new systematic approach to assess the extent to which the TAP contributes to the achievement of the Fund's MYFF goals. The system will include the identification of specific outputs and indicators and a management tool to collect and analyse information in a user-friendly way. The implementation of interventions will be more systematically monitored than in the past by the CSTs, the Technical Support Division and the geographical divisions. This will also help contribute to the assessment of CST assistance. Annual CST reports and a sample of annual country reports will be analysed each year by the Technical Support Division and the geographical divisions in consultation with country offices, CSTs, the Strategic Planning and Coordination Division and the Office of Oversight and Evaluation.

76. The annual meeting of agency representatives, CST Directors, the Technical Support Division and the geographical divisions will assess the effectiveness of the TAP; plan annual training workshops for CSTs; and discuss mechanisms for using CSTs to promote, help adapt and implement training activities for relevant products developed by the agencies, both through the partnership programme as well as from the regular work of the agencies. This annual meeting will also monitor the inter-agency nature of the TAP and propose mechanisms through which it can be strengthened. The meeting will also be used to review the performance of the partnership programme and to discuss the work plan and budget for the following year.

77. Evaluation. An independent evaluation will be conducted during the fourth year of the new TAP system to assess its impact. Special emphasis will be given to the medium- and long-

term effects in the population and development field resulting from the use of the technical information, analysis and recommendations provided by the TAP system. The evaluation will also assess the cost-effectiveness of this option in providing technical support.

VII. MANAGING THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME

78. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the new programme, several issues need to be addressed. New staffing patterns will be established; the consultants' roster will be updated and improved in terms of selection and quality assurance; and a strong support system for the TAP will be put in place. The resources and capacity of country offices to access technical advisory services from a broad range of sources will need to be strengthened.

79. Human resources. The staffing profiles of the CSTs will undergo changes in approach and structure. In order to put these new arrangements in place, several steps will be carried out. First, UNFPA will update the job descriptions for all technical adviser positions. Second, the attention of potential high-level candidates will be drawn through an advertising campaign. All posts in the programme will be opened for competition. The selection process will be conducted in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and is planned to be concluded around June 2002. Technical advisers currently serving on CSTs or in agency posts will be invited to apply, if they wish to remain with the programme beyond the end of 2002. The fullest consideration will be given to existing advisers with an outstanding track record who meet the new selection criteria. In order to give all advisers adequate time to plan for their future, all contracts – except of staff who are due to retire – will be extended until the end of 2002.

80. Building a support system for the TAP. In order for the new programme to reach its full potential, it will need adequate resources and a support system. Adequate funds will be needed in each of the nine CST offices for learning and training, knowledge dissemination, and the hiring of short-term consultants who can supplement the CST's work in highly specialized areas of expertise not available in the teams. Each office should have capable support staff, familiar with information technology and database management. At headquarters, dedicated staff will be assigned full time to the management and logistical backstopping of the TAP. The budget for the new TAP needs to reflect these requirements.

81. Links to UNFPA's transition process. Since UNFPA is in the midst of a transition process, some of the transition team's findings may further shape the manner in which the new TAP will develop. The transition team intends to examine, among others, issues of organizational arrangements, the flow of work, and country office typology that could lead to the strengthening of UNFPA's programming capacity at the country level, thereby facilitating the efforts of the CSTs to take on a more strategic, rather than operational, role. It will contribute to further reinforcing the relationship between CSTs and headquarters. The transition team will review

communications and knowledge sharing that might lead to the strengthening of the capacity of the CSTs to reflect on lessons learned and to disseminate their findings. Improvements in the area of communications technology might also lead to less travel and more interaction through video conferencing and on-line document sharing. It is to be expected, therefore, that incremental improvements in UNFPA's response to its mandate, brought about through the transition process, would further strengthen its technical advisory work as well and thus contribute to the even more effective functioning of the TAP system.

VIII. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

82. The proposed option for strengthening the TAP has a total cost of $76 million for a four-year period. This includes the estimated costs for 2002, which would be a transition year, of $22 million, which would include the current number of TAS and CST posts (94), CST offices, CST activities and headquarters support, and $54 million for the 2003–2005 period, including 78 CST posts (70 advisers and 8 Directors), with an estimated annual cost of $18 million. Other components of the TAP during this three-year period will include the strategic partnership programme, the management of the local CST offices and the management of the TAP from headquarters. This budget allocates approximately 80 per cent of resources to programme activities (CST posts, CST activities and the strategic partnership programme) and 20 per cent to programme support (CST office costs and headquarters management).

IX. ELEMENTS FOR A DECISION

83. The Executive Board may wish to:

(a) Endorse the proposed option for UNFPA's Technical Advisory Programme;

(b) Authorize the Executive Director to commit an amount of $76 million over the four-year period 2002-2005 for its implementation;

(c) Request the Executive Director, in the context of the UNFPA annual report, to report to the Executive Board on the implementation of new arrangements for the UNFPA Technical Advisory Programme.

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